A Modern Trend of Study of Buddhism in Thailand: King Mongkut and Dhammayutikanikāya

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Abstract

This paper will examine King Mongkut's attempt to develop an interpretation of Buddhism consistent with Western science and learning. This attempt is marked by the beginning of a fundamental epistemological shift in doctrinal Thai Buddhism. The theoretical shift, which continues to have significant religious implications today, involves the rejection of the layered or hierarchical notion of truth which underlay traditional Buddhist teachings and replaced it with the notion of a single, universal, and all encompassing truth.

Although Theravada Buddhism has been the national religion of Thailand since the Sukhothai period in the thirteenth century, the popular understanding of traditional Theravada Buddhism was often clouded by a mythological and popular overlay mixed with magical beliefs, superstition and a mixture of Brahmanistic rites. These aspects of Thai Buddhism became problematic for many Buddhists when they were exposed to Western science, ideology and authentic Buddhism. King Mongkut found that these practices conjoined with delusion were far away from the true teachings of

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Buddha. He referred to this kind of belief as *'Āciṇṇakappikā'* or *'Āciṇṇakappikanikāya'* meaning the type of Buddhism traditionally inherited without openness, without light and with no further explanation given.

King Mongkut viewed authentic Buddhism as the unique principle of a single, universal and all encompassing truth. Rejecting the superstitious beliefs that had attached themselves to Buddhism in the course of centuries, he preached Buddhism in its pure form based on the Pāli Canon instead of the Commentaries. He showed that Buddhism, if properly understood, contains nothing that is contrary to common sense or in conflict with science and that it is primarily a moral system thoroughly suited to modern needs. Commenting on King Mongkut's critique, American Presbyterian missionary Jasse Caswell observed that King Mongkut totally demythologized Buddhism such that it rejected 'everything in religion which claims a supernatural origin[2]'. Reformation made by King Mongkut resulted in the improvement of monastic discipline to bring it closer to the *vinaya*, and he also deconstructed and reinterpreted many traditional Thai Buddhist teachings. This trend of practice formed the nucleus of a new, stricter group of Thai Buddhism named Dhammayutika or Dhammayutikanikāya, meaning 'those adhering to the accurate doctrine.'

King Mongkut's legacy continues to have significant religious implication to the present day. Following King Mongkut's emphasis on returning to the original teaching of the Buddha Prince-patriarch Vajiranyanavarosa, his son and the founder of the Thai Buddhist education system repeatedly stated that he hoped others would make further explorations in the direct study of the Pāli Canon as a source for spiritual guidance, and that the

[2]Bradley 1966:39

commentaries be accepted only when they are in line with the Canon. Referencing such implications today, many scholars write that popularizing the notion of advancing knowledge in Buddhism, rather than simply elaborating on inherited tradition is the necessary condition for the twentieth century scholarly contributions of Prince-patriarch Vajiranyanavororas, Phra Brahamagunabhorn (P.A. Payutto) and innovative doctrinal interpretations of Phra Dhammakosacharya (Buddhadasa Bhikkhu) (see Thanissaro 1997; Swearer 1999:202).

In addition, King Mongkut's emphasis on meditation set up a strong tradition of deep meditation practice, this led to the establishment of the Thai forest tradition, later led by renowned meditation masters like Venerable Phra Ajarn Mun. This trend initiated by King Mongkut of exploring Theravada Buddhism was considered a daring innovation in Thailand. It led to the formation of a group of 'progressive' Buddhist monks who are always seeking to learn and who dare to do new things to uphold the correctness and purity of Buddhism. This also led to the modernization of the Thai Buddhist education system including the establishment of the present Buddhist universities.

Introduction :
Thai Buddhism and King Mongkut[3]

Buddhism both Theravāda and Mahāyāna Buddhism entered Thailand from many directions and in many different periods. There were, however, Buddhism that Thai people have continuously adhered to from the Sukhothai period to the present day is Theravāda Buddhism received both directly and indirectly from Sri Lanka. Therefore, in this paper the term 'Theravāda Buddhism' means the Sri Lankan style of Theravāda Buddhism in general and the Theravāda Buddhism of the Ratanakosin period (1782—present) of Thailand in particular. The framework for this study is the modernization of Theravāda Buddhism led by King Mongkut (1804-1868) and it's implication to present Thai Buddhism. King Mongkut authored over 100 articles, both in Pāli and Thai. His Pāli works alone numbered 35, the highest quantity of Pāli literature ever written by any scholar in the Ratanakosin period.

Buddhism in Thailand has influenced society and vice versa. During the period of King Rama III (1824-1851), there were periods of great change in studying Thai Buddhism in which Prince-monk Mongkut (who later became King Mongkut from 1851-1868) introduced the modern trend of study of Buddhism in Thailand. Dissatisfied with the old practices of Buddhism, the Prince-monk launched a reform programme to make Thai Buddhism as close as possible to the Pāli tipiṭaka of Theravāda Buddhism. This involved a reform of monastic discipline, changes

[3] I am very grateful to Associate Professor Suchao Ploychum who tirelessly provided me with all original books, information and ideas.

in details of rituals, and most importantly a redefinition of the Pāli tipiṭaka or Pāli Canon.

In addition to the many and varied biographies of King Mongkut, there are many books and articles written about King Mongkut from a political perspective. King Mongkut's reformation of Thai Buddhism with the establishment of a new group of monks under the label of Dhammayut became a juicy debate among scholars. Some hold the view that he introduced a schism into Thai Buddhism (see Tambiah 1976:256; 1988:159-60; Tiyavanich 1997:5). Some hold the view that his emphasis on modern science and rationality diminishes the supramundane value of Buddhism and make it more profane than sacred (see Visalo 2003: chp. 1). Some even claim that his tenure of monkhood in the monastery was in fact the time he was preparing his career for political successor. These misrepresentations are too complex to discuss in this paper. Hence, I have limited myself only to King Mongkut's exploration of Theravāda studies. However, I believe this paper will also shed some light on those misrepresentations, directly or indirectly.

Study of Buddhism in Thailand

An important aspect of Buddhism is education, therefore, Buddhism is sometimes known as the 'religion of learning.' If one converses with any monk in Thailand, he is likely to tell you that in the past the wat played an important educational role. With the continuing impact of Western civilization, modernization and urbanization, the role of monks and novices on Thai education and society has diminished. Some educated monks will say that it is time that the sangha recaptured it's former role; but they will also concede that the traditional monastic education is outmoded in many ways and needs to be restructured. Similarly, recent research on monastic education in Thailand indicates that the teaching of Buddhism at both the grassroot and higher levels is not efficient. Research shows that it is not leading to the achievement of its goals because the objectives of monastic education are obscure, qualified teachers of Buddhism are few and monastic education does not get continuous financial and administrative support from the sangha and the government. Research also shows that the role of the wat on education and society is diminishing. The administration of wats is outmoded and cannot respond to the needs of modern society. This has resulted in the inefficiency of the sangha to propagate Buddhism. The wat becomes a place for monks to live and perform religious rituals or even worse it merely serves as a museum and tourist destination. Therefore, there is need for great change and improvement in the monastic education in Thailand.[4]

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[4] College of Religious Studies, Mahidol University. *Nam Thong Sikkhālai.* A souvenir publication of the College of Religious Studies. 2004:37. This is the

In the past, there were no centrally designed syllabi for all monasteries to follow.[5] The nature of traditional monastic education was clearly determined by perceived traditional needs. The subjects were not necessarily religious alone, but reflected 'instead whatever academic abilities the teacher had such as mathematics or poetry, for example.'[6] There were no fixed curriculum or textbooks for teachers to follow and plan their teaching accordingly. We do not therefore know what texts have actually been used to teach monks and novices in monasteries.

Ideally, monastic education in general is deeply rooted in the studies of morality *(silasikkhā)*, mind or meditation *(cittasikkhā)* and wisdom (*paññāsikkhā*). In another word, these studies can be summarized into a conventional tripartite division of Buddhism into learning (*pariyatti*), practice (*paṭipatti*) and realization (*paṭivedha*). Each part is higher than the preceding but also depends upon them. Pariyatti means the preservation of the scriptures. Though this is a lowly thing, it is the basis for everything higher, and thus indispensable. Monks whose emphasizes is on scripture learning (*ganthadhura*) are the vehicle for pariyatti; their function is to hand on the doctrines by teaching other monks and preaching to the laity. That they are also supposed to practise what they preach (*paṭipatti*) and strive towards Enlightenment (*paṭivedha*) goes without saying.[7]

Thailand's past monastic education can simply be divided into two: formal and non-formal education.

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result of many research papers relevant to the monastic education in Thailand conducted by my students at Mahidol University in 2003.

[5] Keyes, Charles. *Thailand: Buddhist Kingdom as Modern Nation-State,* p. 184

[6] Zack, Stephen. *Buddhist Education Under Prince Wachirayan Warorot,* p. 44

[7] R. Gombrich, *Buddhist Precept and Practice.* 1995. p. 316

The Formal education is the education provided for monks and novices which is known as *pariyatti-dhamma*. Pariyatti-dhamma is a systematic institutionalized curriculum of teaching and examination. This type of education has been established from the Ayutthaya period (1350-1767), however the specific date of the establishment of Buddhism in Ayutthaya is unknown. Based on the report of La Loubère, the French envoy to King Narai's (1657-88) court, formal monastic education in Thailand probably first began in the Ayutthaya period and continued until the early period of Ratanakosin. La Loubère attests to the fact that in Ayutthayan times state-regulated ecclesiastical examinations were periodically held.[8]

This monastic education was limited only to monks and novices because it was a study of scriptural text recorded in Pāli language. In Thailand, it is considered to be a main duty of all monks and novices to learn Pāli. Evidence shows that the holding of religious examinations for monks 'was an affair of state, being included in the functions of a king as the upholder of the Faith.'[9] In a similar way, the sangha too takes this task very seriously.

Non-formal education is the Buddhist study undertaken by lay people. Lay people study Buddhism in various ways, for example, by listening to sermons delivered by monks on different occasions. Sabbath (*wan phra*) days particularly are considered to be days of listening to the sermon. These days are known as '*dhammasavana* day' or 'dhamma listening day'. These are organized once a week in most Buddhist wats on the eight and fifteenth lunar day.

Besides listening to sermons lay people also learn Buddhism through discussion with monks or listening to dhamma-talks

[8] Tambiah, 1976: 203

[9] Tambiah, 1976: 204

delivered by monks or lay scholars on various occasions. Furthermore, one can learn Buddhism by reading books: while this is presently the easiest way to learn and study, it was difficult in ancient times as books were rare and hand-written.

It is important to notice that current Buddhist education in Thailand, both formal and non-formal, does not use tipiṭaka as the first hand scriptures for the study. However, it appears that three *parian* degrees were granted in the late Ayutthayan period: the third grade for proficient translation of *Suttanta Pitaka*, the second grade similarly with respect to the *Vinaya Pitaka*, and the first grade with respect to the *Abhidhamma Pitaka* as well as the other two 'baskets.' Prince Damrong described a similar system of three grades as being in effect in King Rama I's reign.[10] Although monastic education of late Ayutthaya and early Ratanakosin period had curricula made up of all three baskets of tipiṭaka, in actual teaching and learning only few texts was selected.

The pariyatti-dhamma or formal monastic education system was changed in the early Ratanakosin period. It was in the reign of King Rama II that the third Supreme Patriarch Mī (1818-1819) revised the examination system, instituting the Pāli nine grades, a system that has continued into modern times.[11] It is called *prayog*. The annual examination is managed by the Central Pāli Examination Board (*Mae Kong Dhamma*). It has changed from using the first hand scriptural texts of tipiṭaka in the curriculum to using commentaries (*aṭṭhakathā*), sub-commentaries (*ṭika*) and later literary work (*pakaraṇa*) instead. In other words, the Buddhist curriculum has changed from studying the tipiṭaka first hand to studying commentaries of later texts instead. Some suggest such changes were made because the tipiṭaka is made of many

[10] Tambiah, 1676: 203
[11] Tambiah, 1976: 204

voluminous books. If one cannot study them completely the overall understanding of Buddhism may not be accurate, or in other words it cannot be understood holistically. The doctrines in all three baskets of tipiṭaka are specific doctrines. Some doctrines give only the topics without any details. Therefore, the direct study of tipiṭaka is a difficult task and to understand it completely requires much dedication and effort.

On the contrary, some commentaries (*aṭṭhakathā*) and later literary works (*pakaraṇa*) explain in detail some of the doctrines from the tipiṭaka. Moreover, these descriptions may refer to other relevant doctrines both within and beyond the tipiṭaka to facilitate on understanding of those wider and profound Buddhist doctrines in a very short time. Additionally, one would learn doctrines in detail which cannot be found in the tipiṭaka. These commentaries and later literary works are a compilation of teachings from various sources and various subjects compiled in a single place.

The topics presented in these commentaries and later literary works have been chosen systematically in a handbook based on what should be learned as foundational knowledge. This facilitates students in understanding and studying those doctrines. Hence, this could be a reason for using commentaries and later literary works with new improved curricula for *pariyatti-dhamma* in the early Ratanakosin period. In commentaries, monastic discipline (*vinaya*), discourses (*sutta*) and higher teachings of *abhidhamma* are all included at one place. This helps new students to develop basic knowledge of Buddhism and lay down foundation for them to able to study the original texts of the tipiṭaka directly by themselves with ease and convenience.

Non-formal monastic education is not much different. When a monk or lay scholar delivers a sermon or lecture his sermon is based mostly on the stories from various commentaries, sub-commentaries or later literary texts instead of referring directly

to the tipiṭaka. Moreover, various doctrines and instructions are the views of the particular teachers. Therefore, many doctrines and teachings are not based on any scriptural texts. Such doctrines seem to be increasingly present in Thai Buddhism. This is attested too by Charles Keyes: 'the evidence from monastery libraries in (Laos and) Thailand... reveals that what constitutes the Theravādin dhamma for people in these areas includes only a small portion of the total tipiṭaka, some semi-canonical commentaries such as Buddhaghosa's Visuddhimagga, a large number of pseudo-jātaka and other pseudo-canonical works, histories of shrines and other sacred histories[12].' He further lists three key texts which he suggests to define the basic parameters of monastic education in Thailand because they were in almost every monastic library.[13] These texts are the Traiphum Phra Ruang (*Tribhūmikathā*), the Phra Mālai and the Vessandon [*Vessantara-jātaka*]. This shows how Buddhism in Thailand is perceived and what underlays traditional Buddhist teachings.

[12] Justin McDaniel, 'The Curricular Canon in Northern Thailand and Laos' in *Manussaya: Journal of Humanities*, 4:2002, p. 20

[13] Charles Keyes, *Thailand: Buddhist Kingdom,* p. 179.

Buddhist Conservatism in the Early Ratanakosin Period

An important landmark in the development of monastic education occurred during the reign of King Rama III (1824-1851) in the early Ratanakosin period, particularly under King Mongkut's leadership while he was still a monk.

Buddhism of the early Ratanakosin period was the successive continuation of Ayutthaya period. As a result of war with Burma, in 1767 Ayutthaya was severely destructed. This nearly eliminated the Thai sangha, however, it was fortunate that many other counties of Thailand were not so affected by the war. The Thai sangha, therefore, was not totally destroyed. Nevertheless, nearly all senior monk scholars good at monastic disciplines (*vinaya*) and doctrines (*dhamma*) died before the war ended. When King Taksin (1767-1782) founded the new capital of Thonburi he searched for a senior monk to appoint as the Supreme Patriarch for the stability of Buddhism and the sangha. He was not able to find a single monk who was suitable for the position. The only monk he was able to get for the position of the first Supreme Patriarch of Thonburi was Phra Ajarn Sri of Wat Phra Chao Phanangcheng of Ayutthaya who had fled war and was residing at Nakhorn Sri Dhammarat at that time. Additionally, most Buddhist scriptures were burned, destroyed and lost in the final battle of the Ayutthaya war. The very short 15 year reign of the Thonburi kingdom not much was able to restore the lost Buddhist scriptures.

Once King Rama I founded Ratanakosin as the capital, he tried to revive and improve Buddhism in every aspect in order to make Ratanakosin prosper just as it did in Ayutthaya. In the process

of reviving Buddhism, King Rama I (1782-1809) gathered the tipiṭaka scriptures from all around the country as well as from other kingdoms to restore them properly. He also gave royal command to revise the scripture thoroughly, the first revision of the tipiṭaka made during the Ratanakosin period. Since then, Buddhist studies in Thailand have been completed with the whole set of the tipiṭaka. In addition to the restoration of the tipiṭaka, most Buddhist activities, local beliefs and other Buddhist practices of Ayutthaya were also strictly preserved. Therefore, Buddhism of the early Ratanakosin period was not much different from the Ayutthaya period. In order to shed some light on Buddhist conservatism in the early Ratanakosin period, I will briefly discuss three aspects of Buddhist conservatism, popular during the King Rama I to the King Rama III reign. They are local beliefs, Buddhist practices and Buddhist studies.

1. **Local belief:** Popular belief among Buddhists was that Buddhism would last for only 5,000 year. This statement first appeared in the Samantapāsādikā[14] commentary of Ven. Buddhaghosa, and it was the widespread belief of most Theravadin Buddhists including Thais that Buddhism would decline. Most Pāli literature composed in Thailand mentioned this belief. Ratanakosin period was not excluded from this belief either as it is mentioned in the Collections of Royal Interrogations No. 16 of King Rama I that 'the Buddha lay down Buddhism for 5000 year[15].'

Believing that Buddhism would last for 5,000 years led to the further belief in the disappearance (*antaradhāna*) of five things: religious learning (*pariyatti*), practice (*paṭipati*), realization (*paṭivedha*), monasticism (*linga*), and relics (*dhātu*).[16] It was

[14]Samantapāsādikā Mahāvibhangavaṇṇanā (Thai translation), p. 59

[15] Collections of Royal Interrogations [in Thai], p. 102

[16] Sangtiyavongs: Ratanakosin Literature Vol. 3: 323. The sequence of

thought that these five things would gradually disappear starting with the disappearance of religious learning to the disappearance of the relics at last. It was believed that the Buddha's relics from everywhere would gather into a form of the Buddha and would burn to ashes. This would be the complete end of Buddhism after having been established for 5000 years. This type of Buddhist literature, both in Pāli and Thai, is widely available. For example, Sangītivamsa, the history of Councils written in the period of King Rama I, discusses the disappearance of the five things at great length.

There were clear indications that Buddhism in the early Ratanakosin period was declining greatly. This is clearly mentioned by King Rama I in his Royal Order Notification No 8: 'these days Buddhist sangha has brought to a halt as it has been declining for too long till it cannot be developed anymore. Accordingly, no one reproaches anybody.'[17] This royal thought of King Rama I signifies that Buddhism was declining and it was observed for the sake of show alone. No one strictly followed the disciplines because all monks and novices thought there was no point in practicing the teachings. This illustrates the influence of the belief in the five disappearances. It had a severe negative influence on the behaviour and practise of the Thai sangha of that time. This negative influence extended into other areas of Buddhist activities by bringing many non-Buddhist elements into Buddhism

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disappearance of five things is different in each place and period. In *Tāmnan mūlasāsanā* or *History of Origin of Buddhism* composed in Lanna period of 14th century the first sequences is the disappearance of realization (*adhigama antaradhāna*) followed by practice, religious learning, monasticism and relics. The sequence in Sri Lanka differs from Thailand. Gombrich (1995: 335) writes that in Sri Lanka it is believed that the relics will disappear first and followed by realization, monks and novices, practice and religious learning.

[17] Kot Phra Song (Sangha Enactment), p. 562

such as belief in superstition, black magic and even in the power of gods and ghosts. These beliefs still exist among both sanghas and laity.

2. **Practice**: Monks in the early Ratanakosin period were very lax in the practice of monastic discipline (*vinaya*). This persuaded King Rama I (1782-1809) to issue Sangha Enactments (*Kot Phra Song*) in order to force the monks to behave within the Buddhist discipline. There are two reasons these monks observed non-Buddhist practices.

The first reason is the lack of Buddhist study. There was no formal Buddhist education in monasteries for people who ordained as monks and novices. Most of the learning processes and studies depended upon the teacher. Monks and novices learned and practiced only what their teachers taught or simply followed their predecessors without properly learning or analyzing the reasons behind those practices. When teachers had wrong beliefs students, too, followed them wrongly. The erroneous practices of monks and novices were observed both intentionally and unintentionally.

Secondly, at issue were wrong education and belief. Wrong education meant that monks and novices merely followed their teachers without studying the true principles of Buddhism or studying without proper judgment. Wrong beliefs were, for example, that Buddhism would last for 5,000 years, the disappearance of five things in Buddhism or believing that Buddhism would decline and nothing can be done to revive it. Accordingly, Buddhist monks and novices believed that there was no benefit in adhering properly to the doctrine and discipline because the highest goal of Buddhism was no longer attainable.

Both reasons were in fact grounded in the weakness of Buddhist studies and lack of proper practices of Buddhism of that time. The Sangha Enactment of the early Ratanakosin period illustrates a general picture of Thai Buddhism with full non-

Buddhist practices of monks and novices[18] :

> 'They [monks and novices] do not feel moral shame and dread, behaving in a manner of shameless monks by being drunk, eating afternoon. Some play gamble while some refuse to put robes on and behave like a lay. Some do not shave their heads and eyebrows and disguise themselves to go places unsuitable for monks both in days and nights. Some go to theatres to watch the shows and get into crowd to jostle with women. Some joke and speak foully with women. Some seeing young handsome boys abuse them with words and hugs and take them out together. Some even dress those boys to compete each other for those boys. Some shop for good silk fabric and made robes out of it in different colours. Some use belt while others not. Some cover their head and decorated with flowers behind ears. Some smoke and walk like a lay. Some possess amulets, black magic, ritual knives, sword etc. like robberies. Some team up as a gang and harass girls both in day and in night time by covering their shaven heads and behave like a lay. When monks were invited in house for merit making ceremonies they recite Buddhist chants like singing songs from different nations and rhythms etc...'

Moreover, monks and novices observed Buddhism based merely on what their teachers taught them rather than studying from the *tipiṭaka* itself. Even the practice of meditation was wrongly practiced. King Mongkut found that the way of calm and of insight meditation was practised incorrectly–conjoined with delusion– 'as though one might borrow the nose of someone else for breathing' (or blindly rely on a blind guide). The teachers preached about Dhamma neither openly nor clearly, nor in a way that would stimulate faith among those who were learning. The

[18] 'Kot Phra Song (Sangha Enactment)' in the Code of Three Seals No. 568-9

teachers sometimes get angry when pupils asked them questions or their explanation ended in short by referring to the Ancient Teachers' tradition such as *Ācinnakappikā*, meaning 'the great ones have done like this.'[19] Meditation, therefore, was practiced less to clarify the mind but to gain supernatural power. Still there were a great many monks who lived as hermits, submitting their bodies to ascetic rigours, and taming the birds and timid deer of the forest with their gentleness.[20]

When monks were leading erroneously lay people, too, practised accordingly. It is stated in the Sangha Enactment (*Kot Phra Song*) of King Rama I that 'nowadays people in all walks of life when they listen to the Mahāvessatara Jātaka instead of listening to it with a great faith and respect in the content they only look out for useless jokes and pranks. Monks who deliver the sermon are not learned in the Pāli tipiṭaka but good at prose and poetry instead in order to use it in their rude jokes and pranks for their own advantages and make living out of it. They do not study Buddhism and as a result it conduces to the decline of Buddhism and become careless in the teachings of the Buddha.'[21]

Moreover, the erroneous beliefs and misunderstandings of Buddhism were conducive to so many erroneous practices that, as Griswold[22] states, 'some misguided zealots killed themselves or cut off a finger as a sacrifice to the Buddha.' In general, the lack of study by both monks and laity led to belief in 'superstition, amulets, horoscopes and propitiation of the ancient earth-spirits.'[23]

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[19] His Majesty King Rama the Fourth Mongkut, p. 40

[20] A.B. Griswold, *King Mongkut of Siam,* p.103

[21] Ruang Kotmai Tra Samduang (The Code of Three Seals), p. 545

[22] A.B. Griswold, *King Mongkut of Siam,* p. 123

[23] A.B. Griswold, *King Mongkut of Siam,* p. 121

3. **Monastic education**: Monastic education in the early Ratanakosin period was influenced extensively by political unrest as the warfare with Burma was still proceeding. It was not running smoothly because the state was engaged in the warfare. Griswold (1968: 103), author of King Mongkut's biography writes, 'the war with Burma had caused inestimable disaster. The old capital, Ayutthaya, had been the chief seat of monastic learning; and when it was destroyed in 1767, most of its monasteries, together with their books, went up in flames...' The status of monastic education of that time was similarly illustrated in the Sangha Enactments of King Rama I: 'monks are not studying the tipiṭaka and not obedient to teachers and preceptors which lead to ignore the book of disciplines. They just pretend to be in the discipline and practising meditation and boasting about supernatural power to gain peoples' faith on them.'[24]

Dilapidation of monastic education continued during the period of King Rama III. He felt sad about its status as it was recorded that[25]

> 'he wishes to have well versed monks and novices in tipiṭaka in order to give royal patronage to them as a symbol of his faith in the religion. In attempting to find such monks, he personally attended the examination of monastic education (*pariyatidhamma*) for 25 days only to find that none of the monks and novices was able to pass any grade of Ek, Tho, Tri or Catwā. He was disappointed and extremely concerned about it. He felt that it has not reached even half of the age of Buddhism (2500 years) but a well versed person in the tipiṭaka has vanished. This signifies that Buddhism is disappearing soon as it is mentioned in the discourse of five disappearances (*antaradhāna*)'.

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[24] 'Kot Phra Song (Sangh Enactment)' in The Code of Three Seals, p. 545, 549

[25] Question No. 5 in Collections of Royal Interrogations [in Thai], p. 206

Moreover, there is also another record which states that King Rama III complained about senior monks (*Phra Rājā Gaṇa*) of the time[26] that 'they are not paying attention in training and encouraging monks and novices to study tipiṭaka so he pleads the sangha under the leadership of the supreme patriarch to provide monastic education for monks and novices to able to study the tipiṭaka and pass the examination at least 5-6 monks per year'.

[26] Collections of Royal Interrogations [in Thai], p. 207-8

Perspective of Thai Buddhism before the Reformation

King Mongkut entered the monkhood, like most members of the Royal Family. He first sought instruction courses of meditation for short period. Once he had decided that he would be in the monkhood for an uncertain period of time he then followed up the practice of meditation which he learnt at the starting of his monkhood. As King Mongkut had a habit of implacability, when he began something he persevered the end. Subsequently, when he began to learn meditation he studied intensely with the renowned meditation masters of the time. As a result of his rigorous study he discerned that the meditation study and practice at that time were doubtful and full of illusions. The meditation masters did not understand their own practices. When an explanation was required the masters often referred to 'ancient teachers' tradition' and were unable to relate intellectually the practice to theory (normative canonical basis). After one year King Mongkut decided to pursue the scriptures himself as he was determined to read the Pāli texts as the first hand source and satisfy his inquisitive mind. With his vigorous study of Pāli tipiṭaka it did not take too long for him to become an expert in these fields.

King Mongkut's study did not stop there. In addition to Pāli and other important Buddhist scriptures, he further studied many other languages namely Latin, English, Sansakrit, Khmer, Malayu, Burmese, Vietnamese, and Hindi as well as modern sciences e.g. Science, Geography, Astronomy and Astrology. He also studied comparative religion with the missionaries who were in Thailand at the time. After studying Buddhism and modern science, King Mongkut viewed Buddhism differently. He became more open

and receptive than other contemporary scholars. His perspective on Buddhism can be briefly summarised as follows:

1. **Adherence**: King Mongkut saw that the Thai people's adherence to Buddhism was erroneous because they were just customary Buddhists. They took Buddhism for granted without a true understanding which was not true adherence to Buddhism. He states,[27] 'people these days do things vulgarly without proper thinking. Religious adherence is merely based on the parental affiliation not knowing the Buddha, Dhamma and the Sangha. They have only heard that the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha are as their refuge. They are only told that one would gain merits by offering goods to people who dress in yellow robes. Having heard that they offered goods to them without even knowing the meaning of merit (*bun*) or how one can gain merits. They do not know why on earth one adheres to Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha. And without giving a proper thought they just adhere to Buddhism by following their parents.' King Mongkut saw that Thai people at that time believed in Buddhism based only on faith without using their wisdom or rationality.

2. **Preaching**: King Mongkut saw that the trend in the preaching of Thai monks tended to primary emphasize the subject of generosity (*dāna*). It looked as though the monks were leading people astray and it caused corrupt monks to become religious parasites. He noted,[28] 'in many Buddhist literary scriptures describe about merits endlessly. A person gets happiness or suffering as a merit of what he offers to monks. Because he offered such and such and gave such and such to monks he has received such a result. For example, a scriptural text on merits of all kinds of donations illustrates the merits of generosity in a voluminous 20 sheaves but nothing on morality, meditation and wisdom.'

[27] Royal collection of Thai articles by King Mongkut vol. 1, p. 1
[28] Royal collection of Thai articles by King Mongkut vol. 1, p. 23

3. **Monks' belief**: Perhaps most importantly, even monks' belief in the texts was erroneous as they did not use wisdom to investigate. King Mongkut saw the serious detrimental effect this had on Buddhism. He pointed out that there were many erroneous and doubtful explanations in the scripture texts but no one was concerned about it. Moreover, they were accepted and adhered to traditionally. For example, it was believed that it is a sin (*bāp*) for a monk to die dressed in his yellow robe because robes belong to the Buddha. Therefore, even the Silent Buddha (*pacceka-buddha*) needed to be defrocked prior to his death to prevent him from dying dressed in yellow robe. It was believed that the monk who was well versed in the scripture should be pardoned because of his expertise with the texts even if he had committed serious offenses in his monastic discipline. King Mongkut even felt that people sometimes over praised the King. They did so beyond reality until a story had been concocted as praise the king as the Buddha-to-be (bodhisattva) and one who is about to attain enlightenment etc.[29]

In sum, King Mongkut saw that the Buddhism which Thai people believed and practiced at that time was 'customary Buddhism' which meant upholding Buddhism as it was inherited from his/her predecessors without giving it an analytical thought. Monks, too, believed in their teachers completely. They just followed the teachings and practices that their teachers had observed from generation to generation. King Mongkut labeled such belief and practice as *Āciṇṇakappikanikāya* or Customary Buddhism.

The mores and rites of customary Buddhism were handed down over the centuries from teacher to teacher with little, if any, reference to the *tipiṭaka*. For the most part, these customs taught

[29] Royal collection of Thai articles by King Mongkut vol. 1, p. 24-27

monks to live a sedentary life in the village monastery, serving the local villagers as doctors or fortune tellers. Monastic discipline was loose. Occasionally, monks would go on a pilgrimage called *dhutaʃga* which bore little resemblance to the classic *dhutaʃga* practices. Instead, it was more of an undisciplined escape valve for the pressures of sedentary life. It was simply an alternative Thai word called *'dern dong'* meaning 'walking in the forest'. Moreover, monks and lay people practiced forms of meditation that deviated from the path of tranquility and insight outlined in the *tipiṭaka*. Their practices, called *vichaa aakhom* or incantation knowledge, involved initiations and invocations used for shamanistic purposes, such as protective charms and magical powers. They rarely mentioned nirvana except as an entity to be invoked for shamanic rites.

Modern Trend of Study of Buddhism

During his monastic tenure, King Mongkut engaged in intensive study of Pāli scripture and practice of insight meditation until he became proficient. He was knowledgeable not only in Buddhism but also erudite in several branches of sciences. He pioneered the first intensive study of science in Thailand. Accordingly, he was praised as Thailand's father of science. It would not be wrong to assume that his expertise on Buddhism and modern science caused him to perceive Buddhism differently from others. He also began the modern trend of study of Buddhism in Thailand. As noted in his biography, he was an explorer and dared to experiment. He would not judge anything to be right or wrong which he had not experimented with himself. He requested that others test for correctness if he was unable to finalize a proof himself. His progress in studying Buddhism is easily evident from reading his biography.

Ordained as a monk in 1824, King Mongkut first sought instruction not in the scriptures but in courses of meditation. Being of an earnest disposition he took his studies very seriously. However, he was disenchanted with this training because his teachers could not provide him with the doctrinal and canonical explanations for the practices they taught. The teachers did not explain about cause so that the students could understand with wisdom. They wished the students to listen only to their own way and to practice without reason. This is not the way of teaching to establish the principles of meditation, and it is a waste of time as well. When sitting in meditation this was only the cause of a pain in the back.

King Mongkut then returned to study the Pāli language so

that he would be able to study and understand the doctrines directly from the tipiṭaka. There he could get answers for his practical questions on meditation and Buddhism directly from the original source thereby preventing himself from getting misinformation from others.

King Mongkut became an expert in Pāli tipiṭaka and other Buddhist texts. He detected that even in the tipiṭaka important Buddhist teachings were not in line with the principles of the Buddha, non Buddhist elements having been seamlessly mixed in[30]. For example, King Mongkut saw that the final phrase of the recollection of Sangha (see footnote)[31] insinuate the gain of worldly material which is contrary to an important principle of Buddhism. King Mongkut writes, 'the real doctrines (*sutta*) and discipline (*vinaya*) are teachings for attaining supramundane states or commanding to observe precepts or monastic disciplines in its purest form[32].' On the contrary, King Mongkut emphasizes[33] that 'commentaries need to be scrutinized before believing in it.' He also finds that 'majority of people ignore the original sources of Pāli but believe in description of commentaries and sub-commentaries instead.'

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[30] Royal collection of Thai articles by King Mongkut vol. 1, p. 22

[31] 'Esa bhagavato... that is the Sangha of the Exalted One's disciples, worthy of gifts, worthy of hospitality, worthy of offerings, who should be respected; the incomparable field of merit for the world'

[32] Royal collection of Thai articles by King Mongkut vol. 1, p. 21

[33] Royal collection of Pāli articles by King Mongkut vol. 2, p. 410: tasmimpana aṭṭhakathāvāde uppajjitvā ciram tiṭṭhamāne ṭīkācariyakālato paṭṭhāya yāvajjatanā kañci paṇ∂itam sīsam ukkhipantam na passāma na suṇoma aññadatthum te te tantankālikatantamdesikā sāsanakārakā tameva aṭṭhakathāvādam pālitopi atibalavataram katvā pālim anuddissitvā tameva ukkhipitvā bhiyyo bhiyyo ummattakā viya hutvā.

King Mongkut suggested[34] that in studying scriptures one needs to scrutinize carefully. Any narrative not in line with the tipiṭaka should be surmised to be wrong and should not be easily believed in. Regarding belief, he also instructed[35] that first, one should believe in the tipiṭaka or in the words of Buddha, secondly to one who collected the dhamma[36] (dhamma-sangahakacārya) and thirdly to commentators and others.

This shows that King Mongkut's trend of study of Buddhism is[37] 'to give a good analytical thinking with one's own wisdom before accepting anything. When it is convinced through wisdom that such religion, group, or party can be one's refuge then one should practice and follow that religion. One should not accept anything based upon mere excitement, hearsay, traditions. Nor upon one's fear or joy. Therefore, one should not be wondered on events and just accept it based upon traditions'. King Mongkut's trend of study is to strictly follow important doctrines of Kālāma sutta.

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[34] Royal collection of Pāli articles by King Mongkut vol. 2, p. 390: atha pana bhiyyopi sādhūhi attano mūlagāhe daḷham aṭhatvā dhammavinaye mahantamgāravam purakkhitvā sukhumena ñāṇena sukhumāya satiyā sakalampi vinayam ogayha punapunam upparikkhitabbova sace yujjati sameti anupaṭipajjitabbo... yadi upaparikkhiyamāno pāṭhato sunadarakāraṇalābhena na yujjati na sametīti dissati evam sante duggahitam imehīti cha∂∂hetabbo.

[35] Royal collection of Pāli articles by King Mongkut vol. 2, p. 366: atha kho pālīva pamāṇatarā tattha balakāraṇāni laddhā vuccamāno vinayavinicchayo sudaḷham saddhātabbo hoti.

[36] The first 500 monks who conducted the first Council after the Buddha's death.

[37] Royal collection of Thai articles by King Mongkut vol. 1, p. 387

The Dhammayut: One Who is Always Ready for Improvement and Learning

Based on the above mentioned principle, King Mongkut lay down the modern trend of the study of Buddhism as follows[38]: 'one should not attach to the traditional beliefs but should hold true doctrines and disciplines (*dhamma-vinaya*) instead. One should always keep reviewing one's belief all the time. Being proved it to be accurate one should keep on practise but if one finds that it is inaccurate and against the principle of true doctrines and disciplines of the Buddha then one should give it up.' These principles become the main characteristic of Dhammayut Order, disciples of King Mongkut. Prince-patriarch Vajiranyanavororas once praised Somdet Phra Vanarat (Buddhasiri), one of the ten pioneer monks who founded the Dhammayut Order that[39]: 'Somdet Phra Vanarat likes changing, a true nature of Dhammayut Order.' This means that it is characteristic for Dhammayut monks to always seek to learn, investigate for accuracy and change for accurateness.

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[38] Royal collection of Pāli articles by King Mongkut vol. 2, p. 389-390: iti kho ayam amhākamadhippāyo tena tena pāliyam āgataṭṭhānena dassitāya buddhakāle pavattiyā samāniyamāno yutto samo viya dissati atha pana bhiyyopi sādhūhi attano mūlagāhe daḷham aṭhatvā dhammavinaye mahantam gāravam purakkhitvā sukhumena ñāṇena sukhumāya satiyā sakalampi vinayam ogayha punappunam upparikkhitabbova sace yujjati sameti anupaṭipajjitabbo evam sante anupaṭipajjitum asakkontehipi buddhassevāyam bhagavato adhippāyo anumoditabbo.

[39] Prince-patriarch Vajiranyanavarorasa, *Phra Pravat Tarus Lao*, p. 64

Griswold notes characteristics of Dhammayut monks similarly:[40] 'they (Dhammayut monks) rejected all practices that had no authority other than custom. They accepted all canonical regulations, not merely following them mechanically, but endeavouring to keep their significance ever present in consciousness. They were expected to understand the formulas they recited, the reasons for the rules they were subject to, and the meaning of the acts they performed. In short, the Doctrine they were to adhere to was the Doctrine exactly as the Buddha had taught it, stripped of all apocryphal additions.'

King Mongkut's trend of study of Buddhism is to detach from the teachers' tradition or *Ācciṇṇakappikā*[41] meaning 'the great ones have done like this' and instead to investigate the original sources of Pāli tipiṭaka. Moreover, the tipiṭaka should be investigated thoroughly to discover which teachings are originally the Buddha and which were added later. Therefore, according to King Mongkut 'the most essential thing for all of Dhammayut monks is a thorough knowledge of the scriptures[42] (tipiṭaka).' To facilitate such study King Mongkut instituted a school of Pāli studies at the Wat Bovoranives Vihara to encourage his disciples genuinely to study Pāli. As a consequence, it is recorded that Pāli scholar monks of that time could speak the Pāli language fluently.[43]

In addition to his focus on Pāli studies, King Mongkut encouraged his monks to study English. He provided American Protestant missionaries to teach English at Wat Bovoranives Vihara

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[40] A. B. Griswold, pp.115-6

[41] Royal collection of Pāli articles by King Mongkut vol. 2, p. 510: tattha āciṇṇakappikanikāyikā nāma yesam pāliaṭṭhakathādīsu āgatavacanam appamāṇam sakadesanīvāsinam paṭipattiyeva pamāṇam te ca evam vattāro yam yam porāṇakam tam tam pāliaṭṭhakathādīhi viruddhampi hotu.

[42] A.B. Griswold. P. 116

[43] Chronicle of Wat Bovoranives Vihara, pp. 15-16

as well. Simultaneously, King Mongkut also allowed the missionaries to preach Christianity to any monks and laity who were interested.[44] This helped Buddhists to gain a wider view of the world, particularly in the field of comparative religion.

Based on King Mongkut's trend of study it is obvious that he always emphasized the critical analysis of a subject using the Kālāma sutta as a guide. He also urged all Buddhist students to use rationality in studying and practicing Buddhism. He discouraged holding on to customs, traditions and Ancient Teachers' traditions, rather hold on to the core teaching of the Buddha by stripping off all outer coverings.[45]

King Mongkut's modern trend of study of Buddhism is principally based on the Pāli tipiṭaka. The commentaries and later literary works should be consulted as only secondary sources. Descriptions in commentaries are to be accepted only when they are in line with the Pāli tipiṭaka.[46] King Mongkut's view was that every scripture needs thorough investigation because even in the tipiṭaka there are errorness statements. Such statements were the result of later mixtures and go against the main principles taught by the Buddha. All doctrines (*dhamma*) and monastic disciplines (*vinaya*) aim for the supramundane state, and all other teaching should be compared with the foundational teachings of the Buddha.

King Mongkut was also of the opinion that 'all teachings could be verified directly to the tipiṭaka without referring to commentaries. The teachings in the tipiṭaka are self-proved and

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[44] Siam in Three Periods from the view of William L. Bradley [Thai translation], p. 115

[45] Royal collection of Thai articles by King Mongkut vol. 1, p. 28

[46] Royal collection of Pāli articles by King Mongkut vol. 2, p. 512: ...tasmā ṭīkāya āgatavacanam aṭṭhakathāsamantameva gahetabbam aṭṭhakathāya āgatampi pāliyā samentameva gahetabbam.

support each other throughout. For example, there are many discourses that work as an explanation of other discourses. Some discourses have similar similes and examples. Therefore, King Mongkut said that the teachings in tipiṭaka can be verified by itself.'[47]

King Mongkut's observation was that in the past Buddhist education in Thailand placed more importance on secondary scriptures like commentaries with little interest in tracing back to the original Pāli. This was one cause for the arising of wrong ancient teachers' traditions and led to the wrong practice of Buddhism. In some cases the inaccuracy of the commentaries was obvious, there was no dissention until the people followed accurate teachings without any feeling of guilt. Therefore, King Mongkut's Buddhism is the Pāli tipiṭaka which has the notion of a single, universal and all encompassing truth instead of popular Thai Buddhism with the layered or hierarchical notion of truth underlaying traditional Buddhist teachings.

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[47] Royal collection of Pāli articles by King Mongkut vol. 2, p. 447:

tatthaññam ṭhānamaññassa thānassa hoti vaṇṇanā
aññamaññasarikkhani pāṭhudāharaṇāni ca
ṭhānaṭhānakañāṇena sukhumeneva sabbaso
sallakkhetvā samānetvā vicāretvā tathā tathā
pāliyoyeva nissāya kātabbo dhammanicchayo

Reformation of Thai Buddhist Study

In a Buddhist study, one should always be open to accepting the truth from one who knows the truth, and always be ready to change and improve for rightness and correctness. King Mongkut stated in his letter to the Sri Lankan Order that 'people should not attach so much to the traditional beliefs but should hold true doctrines and disciplines instead. One should always keep reviewing one's belief all the time... Your venerable monks are always welcome to remind us both with your personal visit and with your letters to our temple. If we see that it is a right thing to do we will surely observe it.'[48]

Moreover, King Mongkut also laid down the trend of study for Dhammayut monks that they should not limit their study to their religion alone, but expand it to encompass other religions as well. This will help them understand Buddhism better. It will also help them comprehend the essence and identity of Buddhism. He stated in his second letter to Sri Lanka: 'When we Dhammayut monks, who are searching for the core to accept it as the ultimate refuge, having scrutinized beliefs beyond Buddhism and after learning them well we found that there is no other beliefs which can be better refuge than Buddhism... still, we search for the core

[48] Royal collection of Pāli articles by King Mongkut vol. 2, p. 390: atha pana bhiyyopi sādhūhi attano mūlagāhe daḷham aṭhatvā dhammavinaye mahantam gāravam purakkhitvā sukhumena ñāṇena sukhumāya satiyā sakalampi vinayam ogayha punappunam upparikkhitabbova sace yujjati ... amhākam sayam vā āgantvā sāsanam vā pahiṇitvā satuppādo karaṇīyo sundaram kāraṇam laddhā anuvattissāma.

and beneficial teachings.'[49] This attests that King Mongkut was the first to lay down the study of comparative religion within Buddhist education in Thailand.

Having understood the essence of Buddhism it attests there is no such thing as a miracle, supernaturalism, superstition, reasonlessness or irrationality in Buddhism. Buddhism teaches that everything has cause, rationality and explanation. When people do not know the cause of something is not known it might be called a miracle. As with watching magic, when magician's tricks are understood they are not wondered about anymore. Buddhism tells us there is no such thing as accident in this world, every conditioned phenomenon is a dependent arising. It comes into being in dependence upon causes and conditions, abides because of causes and conditions and disintegrates because of causes and conditions. King Mongkut laid down the trend of study in Buddhism that one who studies Buddhism thoroughly would not believe in superstition, black magic or dote on miracles. This does not mean such things do not exist, rather than we should study the true causes behind them. One should not merely believe irrationally as this is not a way of Buddhist wisdom nor a Buddhist trend.

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[49] Royal collection of Pāli articles by King Mongkut vol. 2, p. 444:

Evam santepi amhākam dhammayutikavādinam
Patiṭṭhānāraham ante sāramattham gavesatam
Nānātitthāyatenesu viññātesu anekadhā
Nānappakārake dhamme sammāvopaparikkhatam
Aññā patiṭṭhā nattheva huram gotamasāsanā
Tasmā evampi bhūtasmim tasmim cirena ābhate
Sāraññevatthamattampi pubbe dassitalakkhaṇam
Sandiṭṭikānisamsam vā atha vāpi apaṇṇakam
Niccampi pariyesāma nicchayāma yathāraham.

Another important trend of study in Buddhism King Mongkut laid down was to hold onto the principle of truth and accuracy instead of revering any sect or individual. King Mongkut modeled this trend as he searched for the accurate practice of monastic discipline (*vinaya*). He first investigated the practices of Thai monks compared with the book of discipline he had previously studied. Noting differences in practice from the scriptures, he further compared Thai practice with the way Mon and Burmese monks practiced those same disciplines. Once he was convinced that the practices of Mon monks were the most accurate in comparison to the principles in the scripture of discipline, he then followed the practices of these Mon monks. He did not stop his study there but further investigated original Buddhism to continually deepen his accurate understanding.

Later when King Mongkut became familiar with Sri Lankan monks he studied and compared their practices with those of the Mon monks. He found that some of the practices of the Mon monks were erroneous e.g. the Pāli pronunciation. Similarly, some of the practices of the Sri Lankan monks were incorrect relative to the discipline of the scriptures.

King Mongkut, therefore, began the process of reforming the practices of Thai monks to bring them in line with the scriptures. He reformed himself first, however, by observing these practices. Perhaps most importantly, as King Mongkut would to reform Thai Buddhism he did not strictly follow any group, sect or individual as his model. Although he accepted that most of the practices of the Mon monks were accurate, he still found some errors in their practices. Although he did not follow the practices of Sri Lankan monks, he accepted that some of their practices were precise and he used them as his model. When he did not have a group or individual from whom to learn, he referred back to the Pāli tipiṭaka. King Mongkut called this trend 'Dhammayutikā,' meaning

'adhering to the truth or accuracy as principle'. King Mongkut's trend attracted a small but strong following of like-minded monks and lay supporters, and in this way the Dhammayut (lit.,*in Accordance with the Dhamma*) movement was born.

Not all Dhammyutikā monks and novices in the period of King Mongkut's monkhood were his apprentices. There were many like-minded monks who were simply studying and practicing correctly as was King Mongkut. He considered these monks also to be Dhammayut or Dhammayutikā monks. King Mongkut called this group of monks as '*purāṇasahadhammika,*' meaning 'one who have been practicing the Dhamma together from the beginning'. On the other hand, the Dhammayut monks who were King Mongkut's apprentices were called '*Phra sit lhuvong derm,*' meaning 'original apprentice.' This illustrates that King Mongkut's trend of study of Buddhism was to hold onto the principle of correctness instead of revering any sect, group or individual. The essence of King Mongkut's trend in studying Buddhism was to use one's wisdom as the means of understanding the truth or accuracy of Buddhism.

Dhammayutikā, therefore, was the direct consequence of King Mongkut's study and practice which later grew to become a group of monks who adhered to King Mongkut's trend. Subsequently, the Dhammayut Order, or Dhammayutikanikāya is not an individual or a group rather it means correct trend. The Dhammayut monks of the first generation held that if anyone understood the accurate principle of doctrines and disciplines, and observed them appropriately, they were Dhammayut monks regardless of their residency and teachers' lineages.

It was King Mongkut's strong conviction that Buddhist education is completed only when both theoretical (*pariyatti*) and practical (*paṭipatti*) studies are properly carried out. He set himself as a good example for others to follow. Having studied and become

an expert on scriptural (*pariyatti*) Buddhism, he also continuously paid serious attention to the practice. Every dry season King Mongkut wandered into the forest (*dhutaʃ ga*) to find solitude and a calm environment for the cultivation of his mind and the practice of meditation. As a result, the first generation of his disciples mostly conducted themselves as a 'forest-monk' or 'meditation-monk.' Later, wandering into remote places for the practice of *dhutaʃ ga,* or austere practices, became a popular practice among Thai monks.

Implications of King Mongkut's Trend of Study of Buddhism

King Mongkut's trend of study of Buddhism continues to have significant religious implications today, both in the study and propagation of Buddhism in Thailand. Following King Mongkut, the first generation of his students brought great change to the field of study of Buddhism in Thailand. Assigning importance to original scriptures, emphasizing rationalism and rejecting popular forms of religion became bold characteristics of King Mongkut's reformed group. With regard to the study of Buddhism, a method of analytical and selective study became the standardized means of study. This modern trend of study had implications for both monks and laity in the wider society.

Venerable Phra Amarabhirakkhit (Kerd Amaro) of Wat Boromniwas was a first generation apprentice of King Mongkut who himself modeled and expanded King Mongkut's legacy. He was well versed in the scriptures and well trained in meditation practices. He passed Pāli 9, the highest examination of Buddhist education of the time, and he was fluent in English too. When he led a monk emissary to Sri Lanka he was praised by the Sri Lankan people for speaking English just like a native. He was renown for his practice of meditation. In 1860, he wrote a book on monastic discipline entitled 'Pubbasikkhāvaṇṇanā' which was used as a textbook for Thai monks and novices until it was replaced in 1913 by another book entitled 'The Entrance to the Vinaya,' authored by Prince-patriarch Vajiranyanavarorasa who was the son of King Mongkut.

The influence of King Mongkut's modern trend of study of Buddhism was not limited to the circle of monks and novices, but

also influenced lay followers. One of the most remarkable lay apprentices following King Mongkut's legacy was Chao Phya Thipakon, better known as Chao Phya Phraklang. He was the Minister of Foreign Affairs under the monarchy of King Mongkut. He published a book in 1867 entitled 'Kitchānukit' or 'a book explaining many things' in which he posited modern views on Buddhism and other religions. The first book printed and published by a Thai without foreign help, it was written in the form of questions and answers, it addressed all the modern sciences which missionaries used as tool to criticize Buddhism. The book became very influential for modern Buddhism among both Thais and foreigners. Later, Henry Alabaster translated some part of that book into English under the title of 'Modern Buddhist' and published it in London in 1870. This became the first book on Buddhism written by a Thai Buddhist to be published in the West. It played an influential role in giving the Western world a very modern and true picture of Buddhism .

Another significant and widely known apprentice of King Mongkut was the Supreme Patriarch Sā Pussadevo who studied with King Mongkut from the time he was a novice. At the age of 18 he passed the highest examination of Pāli 9. He was the first novice to pass the Pāli 9 examination in the Ratanakosin period. He was fluent both in Pāli and Sanskrit. He translated many discourses from the tipiṭaka into sermon form for monks and novices to use in delivering sermons. Another unique contribution Supreme Patriarch Sā Pussadevo made was writing a book on the life of the Buddha entitled 'Pathamasambodhikathā.' In his version of the life of the Buddha all magical and non-human elements were stripped away and a plain, human version of the Buddha's life was presented. Therefore, this version is sometimes prejudicially called the 'Dhammyut version of life of the Buddha.'

The full implication of King Mongkut's legacy was utilized

by Prince-patriarch Vajiranyanavarorasa. He was a second generation apprentice of the Dhammayut Order. Following his father, King Mongkut, he proclaimed very clearly his point that Buddhist education should be based on the doctrines of the Kālāma sutta. He states,[50] 'I should like to make it plain to you that I am satisfied with the Kālāma sutta as the word of the Exalted Buddha.' Prince-patriarch Vajiranyana-varorasa was expert in the Pāli tipiṭaka and in Sanskrit as well as in English, no lesser than his father. The depth and breath of his knowledge on Buddhism was evident by his writings of many Buddhist textbooks, modern Buddhist books and through the monastic education system of Thailand he founded still in use today.

Prince-patriarch Vajiranyanavarorasa's trend of study of Buddhism was clearly analytical and selective. He mentions that[51] 'My habit is not to believe all the words which are found in the scriptures, but rather believing the reasonable words; ...The basis of my writing is that which is found to be reasonable and this should be taken as credible evidence, while what is defective should be opposed whether coming from the Pāli or from the Aṭṭhakathā. With this in mind I have given some opinions so that Vinaya-experts may continue these researches and I hope that this will happen for the progress of knowledge. If we believe only in the way of 'disjunction from knowledge' (*ñāṇa-vippayutta*) the increase of knowledge will be impossible.'

As a consequence of his analytical and selective study of Buddhism, Prince-patriarch Vajiranyanavarorasa began a new trend of study of Buddhism i.e. 'applied Buddhism.' He applied Buddha's teachings to many different aspects of society. This was considered to be a new development of Buddhist study in Thailand.

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[50] The Entrance to the Vinaya vol. 1, p. xiii

[51] The Entrance to the Vinaya vol. 1, p. xiv

Modern Educational Institutions

Prince-patriarch Vajiranyanavarorasa was just 33 when he founded a brand new curriculum for monastic education in Thailand in 1893. He also founded a new educational institute named 'Mahamakut Royal Academy' to organize the new trend of education for monks, novices and laity. Through Mahamakut Royal Academy he educated them not only in Buddhist and Thai studies but in foreign knowledge too.

His main goal in instituting Mahamakut Academy was to found a Buddhist university but he died before his dream came true. However, 26 years after his death, Prince-patriarch Vajiranyanavarorasa's dream of establishing a Buddhist university was accomplished by his disciple Supreme Patriarch Vajiranyanavong. On 31 December 1945, the first Buddhist university was founded at Wat Bovoranives Vihara named 'Mahamakut Buddhist University.' Two years later the second Buddhist university was instituted at Wat Mahadhat, Bangkok.

Besides establishing two Buddhist universities, King Mongkut's trend of study of Buddhism gave birth to many great Thai Buddhist scholars. For example, Sujib Punnyanbhap or Sujivo Bhikkhu played a great role in expanding Prince-patriarch Vajiranyanavarorasa's 'applied Buddhism.' He was one of the key figures in the establishment of the first Buddhist University. Additionally, his Buddhist novels and Buddhist books were very influential in Thai society.

King Mongkut's legacy continues to have significant religious implication into the present day. King Mongkut's son and founder of the Thai monastic education system, followed his father's emphasis on returning to the original teaching. He repeatedly stated

that he hoped others would make further explorations in the direct study of the tipiṭaka as a source for spiritual guidance, and that the commentaries would be accepted only when they were in line with the tipiṭaka. Today, many scholars write that popularizing the notion of advancing knowledge in Buddhism rather than simply elaborating on inherited tradition was a necessary condition for the twentieth century scholarly contributions of Phra Brahmagunabhorn (P.A. Payutto) and for the innovative doctrinal interpretations of Buddhadasa (see Thānissaro 1997; Swearer 1999:202).

In addition, King Mongkut's emphasis on meditation created the foundation for a strong tradition of deep meditation practice which in turn led to the establishment of the Thai forest tradition, later led by renown meditation masters such as Venerable Phra Ajarn Mun. Meditation Master Ajarn Mun Bhuridatto (1870-1949) is the most renowned figure in the Thai meditation lineage. Ajarn Mun was the student of Ajarn Sao Kantisilo (1861-1914); Ajarn Sao was the disciple of Venerable Devadhamma Mao who was the direct apprentice of King Mongkut. Therefore, all forest lineage of the present Thai meditation masters began with Ajarn Sao, Ajarn Mun and even Ajarn Cha, the meditation master affiliated with the Mahanikaya. All descended from King Mongkut's trend of study of meditation, still very influential today in Thailand and abroad.

In 1932 Somdet Phra Maha Viravongs (Uwon Tisso), the ecclesiastical governor of Nakhon Ratsima at the time, envisioned the significance of a systematic education in meditation practices. He ordered Venerable Phra Ajarn Singh Khattiyamo, a main disciple of Venerable Phra Ajarn Mun, to send meditation monk masters to teach meditation to both monks and laity all over the country. This is the reason meditation is currently so popular in Thailand.

Similarly, Somdet Phra Phutthacharn (Arch Āsabho) of Wat Mahadhatu saw the importance of education of Buddhist meditation. In 1951, while holding the ecclesiastical position of Phra Phimaladhamma, he sent some monks from his monastery to train in vipassana meditation practices in Myanmar. He set up a meditation centre at Wat Mahadhatu in 1953 so vipassana meditation practices could be widely taught in Thailand. Since then both the Thai tradition of meditation and the Burmese tradition of vipassana meditation have been very popular in Thailand among both monks and laity.

Conclusion

Due to King Mongkut's trend of study of Buddhism there are two trends or groups of Thai Buddhism: Buddhist trends of Ācciṇṇakappikanikāya and of Dhammayutikanikāya.[52]

The followers of Ācciṇṇakappikanikāya do not hold strictly to the text in the Pāli tipiṭaka and commentaries, neither they adhere to the practices of monks in their own countries. They believe that at the present time it is apposite to follow their predecessors' trend of practices regardless of what the scriptures say.

The followers of Dhammayutikanikāya do not believe in the practices of ancient teachers or customary Buddhism. Instead they follow the words in the sub-commentaries providing they are in line with the commentaries, and follow the words in the commentaries providing they are in line with the primary source of the Pāli tipiṭaka if it is the blameless Pāli.

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[52] Royal collection of Pāli articles by King Mongkut vol. 2, p. 510-515:

Imasmimpi syāmaraṭṭhe bhikkhūnam dve nikāyāva honti porāṇarājakālato yāvajjatanā dvīhi laddhīhi pavattā āciṇṇakappikanikāyo ca dhammayutikanikāyo ca gaṇissaratherasamuhavasena pana cattāro gaṇā honti.

Tattha āciṇṇakappikanikāyikā nāma yesam pāliaṭṭhakathādīsu āgatavacanam appamāṇam sakadesanivāsīnam paṭipattiyeva pamāṇam te ca evam vattāro yam yam porāṇakam tam tam pāliaṭṭhakathādīhi viruddhampi hotu...

Dhammayutikanikāyā nāma ye evamvādino porāṇānam āciṇṇasamāciṇṇam na sabbaso pamāṇato gahetabbam... tasmā tīkāya āgatavacanam aṭṭhakathāsamentameva gahetabbam aṭṭhakathāya āgatampi pāliyā samentameva gahetabbam pāliyampi katthaci kehici va∂∂hetvā likhitam gārayhaṭhānampi bhagavato vacanalakkhaṇam atikamma aṭṭhānadhāvanavasena pavattamānam na gahettabbam.

The modern trend of exploring Theravāda Buddhism initiated by King Mongkut was considered a daring innovation in Thailand. It gave birth to a group of 'progressive' Buddhist monks who are always seeking to learn and who dare to do new things to uphold the correctness and purity of Buddhism. King Mongkut's example was later followed by many new Buddhist scholars such as Prince-patriarch Vajiranyanavarorasa, and Buddhadasa Bhikkhu. They led the Thai sangha to it's focus on studying modern secular subjects until Buddhist universities were established in Thailand. Today both monks and laity can be equally educated both in Buddhism and modern sciences.

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